(ZNS) THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATOR IN THE MARTIN LUTHER KING ASSASSINATION CASE CLAIMS THAT THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S NEW RE-INVESTIGATION OF THE 1968 MURDER IS A SHAM.

HAROLD WEISBERG OF MARYLAND, WHO HAS BEEN INVESTIGATING THE KING CASE ON BEHALF OF JAMES EARL RAY'S ATTORNEYS, CHARGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S NEWEST REPORT ON THE KING ASSASSINATION IS RIDDLED WITH CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT IS REPORTED TO HAVE COMPILED A NEW 10-MONTH INVESTIGATION INTO DOCTOR KING'S MURDER AND TO HAVE ISSUED A 148-PAGE REPORT WHICH CONCLUDES THAT RAY WAS THE LONE ASSASSIN OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER. THE NEW REPORT WAS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MICHAEL SHAHEEN, THE DIRECTOR OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

WEISBERG SAYS THAT BECAUSE OF SHAHEEN'S PARTICIPATION, AT LEAST THREE POTENTIAL CONFLICTS EXIST. FIRST OF ALL, HE SAYS, SHAHEEN COMES FROM THE MEMPHIS AREA -- WHERE KING WAS MURDERED -- AND PLANS TO RETURN THERE IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO GO INTO PRIVATE PRACTICE. ACCORDING TO WEISBERG, ANYONE WHO PLANS TO SURVIVE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE IN MEMPHIS IS VIRTUALLY COMPELLED TO ENDORSE THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE KING ASSASSINATION.

SECONDLY, SAYS WEISBERG, SHAHEEN, BEFORE MOVING TO WASHINGTON, WORKED AS THE LAW CLERK FOR MEMPHIS FEDERAL JUDGE ROBERT MCRAE. JUDGE MCRAE IS THE SAME JURIST WHO RECENTLY REJECTED RAY'S APPEAL FOR A NEW HEARING IN HIS CASE.

THIRDLY, SAYS WEISBERG, THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S INVESTIGATION AMOUNTED TO THE DEPARTMENT SIMPLY RE-EXAMINING ITS OWN HANDLING OF THE CASE EIGHT YEARS EARLIER.

WEISBERG POINTS OUT THAT THE CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SPECIFICALLY RECOMMENDED LAST YEAR THAT INDEPENDENT OUTSIDE INVESTIGATORS RE-EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE, BUT THAT FOR UNEXPLAINED REASONS, SHAHEEN WAS HANDPICKED TO HEAD THE NEW INVESTIGATION INSTEAD --ZODIAC (FEB/4/77)

Note to News Editors: Weisberg's number is (301) 473-8186.

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